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PICTURES  
OF  
YOUTHFUL HOLINESS



BY THE  
REV. ROBERT COOKE, O.M.I.



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**PICTURES OF YOUTHFUL HOLINESS.**

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TO  
HER ROYAL HIGHNESS THE  
PRINCESS MARGUERITE OF ORLEANS,

THIS LITTLE WORK ON YOUTHFUL HOLINESS  
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,  
IN TESTIMONY OF THE MANY VIRTUES PRACTISED BY  
HER ROYAL HIGHNESS  
DURING THE PERIOD OF HER YOUTHFUL EXILE  
IN THIS KINGDOM,  
AND ESPECIALLY OF THE GREAT ZEAL AND CHARITY  
MANIFESTED BY HER ROYAL HIGHNESS IN BEHALF OF THE  
POOR CHILDREN OF TOWER HILL.

*Church of the English Martyrs,*  
Great Prescot-street, Tower Hill,  
Feast of St. Gregory the Great, Apostle of England, 1872.



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## PICTURES OF YOUTHFUL HOLINESS.

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HOLINESS, as a rule, is the fruit of long years spent in God's service; but sometimes it has appeared as a sudden apparition in the lives of certain privileged children. Holiness, even in the child, supposes a series of combats generously sustained, and a series of victories courageously won. Heroism is one of its inherent qualities. The heroism of youthful holiness is one of the most striking manifestations of the power of divine grace. Grace acts with special energy in the virgin mind, undimmed by error, and in the pure young heart, untouched by the taint of vice. The show of holiness in those of mature years is not always accompanied by the reality; but the child is almost ever what he

appears. The heart of the holy child is like some exquisite piece of machinery, the workings of which we can study through a crystal disk encircling it. It is a transparency under our eyes. We can see at a glance that divine grace is the motive power which quickens its thoughts into words full of wisdom, and its desires into actions full of merit. The contemplation of youthful holiness has a special power of drawing young souls to God; and when those of mature years consider what great things children have done for the divine glory, they must feel encouraged not to do less themselves.





## THE CHILDREN IN THE FIERY FURNACE.

AN impious King of Babylon set up a golden statue of himself, and he commanded all the inhabitants of that city, and the representatives of all the provinces of the empire, on a certain day, at a given signal, to fall down before this statue and adore it. His wicked orders were obeyed by the nobles and the magistrates, and judges, and captains, and rulers, and the great men who were placed in authority, and all the princes of the provinces, who fell down and adored the golden statue which the King had set up (Dan. iii. 3).

But there were three children of Israel, Sidrach, Misach, and Abdenago, who boldly and heroically refused to obey the impious orders of the King. In vain did the irritated monarch call them into his presence to upbraid and



threaten them. Children though they were, they quailed not before him. In vain did he say to them: If you adore not the golden statue, you shall be cast the same hour into a furnace of burning fire; and who is the God that shall deliver you out of my hands? They made answer to him in these noble words: 'Behold, the God whom we worship is able to save us from the furnace of burning fire, and to deliver us from thy hand, O King. Be it known unto thee, we will not worship thy gods, or adore thy golden statue which thou hast set up.' Then was the King filled with fury, and the countenance of his face was changed against Sidrach, Misach, and Abdenago, and he commanded that the furnace should be heated seven times more than it had been accustomed to be heated. And he commanded the strongest men in his army to bind the feet of Sidrach, Misach, and Abdenago, and to cast them into the furnace of burning fire. And they walked in the midst of the flames, praising the Lord and blessing His Name. And the fire had no power over their bodies, and not a hair of their heads had been singed.

Which shall we admire most in this mar-

vellous record—the miracle by which the fury of that mighty furnace was subdued, and the fierce flames rendered harmless as the whisperings of the summer wind; or the heaven-inspired courage and heroic piety of the three children of Israel? Alone were they in that great country of Babylon to uphold the cause of God and of truth, in opposition to a fierce, haughty, and powerful King. On the side of unbelief and apostasy, and wickedness, were nobles, and magistrates, and judges, and captains, and rulers, and the great men placed in authority. All these without an exception, to secure the favour of the King, fell at his bidding to adore his statue of gold. What an example for the three holy children to contemplate!—magistrates and judges bowing down before the golden statue of the King. That example would have been fatal to the faith and constancy of these children of Israel, if an inward might of spirit had not sustained them under their trial. In vain were promises made to them, in vain were threats. In vain was the furnace into which they were to be cast, if they obeyed not the King's commands, kindled before their eyes. Their reply to his wicked

threats ceased not to be, 'O King, be it known unto thee, we will not worship thy gods, or adore thy golden statue.'

Ah! how often from that time to this has not the cause of God and of truth been sustained in the great cities of the world by the heroic, though simple, piety of holy children, whilst nobles and great men, in order to please the powers of the world, act against the bidding of their consciences, and bow down before the golden statue!





### THE CHILDREN OF THE MACCABEES.

How marvellous the courage of the seven martyr children spoken of in the Book of Maccabees! The wicked King Antiochus ordered them, out of contempt for the laws of their nation, to eat forbidden meats. What was their reply to the wicked orders of the King? 'We are ready to die rather than to transgress the laws of God, received from our fathers.' The King ordered a brazen cauldron to be made hot, and the tongue of him who had spoken first to be cut out, and his limbs to be hewn off one by one. When he was maimed in all parts, it was farther decreed that he should be brought to the fire, and gradually burnt to death. His mother and brethren were spectators of his frightful torments. Did they lose heart? No. But they exhorted one another to die manfully, saying, 'The Lord will

look upon the truth and will take pleasure in us, as Moses declared in the profession of the canticle: And in His servants He will take pleasure.' Following one another, they went to martyrdom.

One scarcely knows which most to marvel at; the heroic constancy of the holy children under most cruel torments, or the prophet-like character of their utterances, which sometimes rose in grandeur to the sublimity of an Isaias in denouncing kingly crime, and again sank down to softest notes of prayer as their holy spirits conversed with God, or concerning Him. Listen to the words spoken by one of these blessed young martyrs as he was at the last gasp of life: 'Thou indeed, O most wicked man, destroyest us out of this present life; but the King of the world will raise us up, who died for His laws, in the resurrection, to eternal life.' And another holy martyr child, the last of the seven, softly and with sweet tender humbleness and resignation, breathed forth these sighings of contrite love as he approached death: 'We suffer for our sins; and though the Lord our God is angry with us a little while, for our chastisement and correction, yet

He will be reconciled again to His servants. I, like my brethren, offer up my life and my body for the laws of our fathers, calling upon God to be speedily merciful to our nation.'

The piety of the child is almost ever a reproduction of the piety of the mother. It is his mother's tongue the child first speaks. In her footsteps his tiny feet first tread. His hand is in hers, and works by her in its first manipulations. He laughs in her smile, he weeps in her tears, and he almost thinks in her thoughts. He is as if still a portion of herself. The child is in a way the mother in miniature. And such is the power which certain holy mothers have of impressing their likeness in every trait of its sanctity on the moral being of their children, that once impressed, it never can be effaced. The portrait on canvas may have already faded away, and years may have entirely blotted out all resemblance in earthly mien between mother and child, but there is a resemblance which no years can alter, there is a beauty which never changes, save when it passes into the more beautiful. It is that which springs up in God between the holy mother and the pious child. The beautiful type

of maternal piety stamping itself upon the early days of son or daughter, lives on during the after-life of the faithful child. Amidst every change of circumstance, variety of condition, and shade of character, it is one of the few things which never seem to alter. We see it ever the same, always simple, fervent, deep, and strong, wherever we meet it, under the cowl of the recluse, or veil of holy virgin, or ermine of the judge, or martial plume of the warrior, or modest hood and sweet subdued deportment of the devout Christian of the humbler ranks. Should morning or mid-day clouds obscure it for a while, it is almost sure to re-appear as evening sets in. The child of the holy mother, forgetting himself for a period, at last remembers who he is and what he ought to be. Quickly do his mind and heart travel back over bygone years and distances to the home of his early childhood. Events occurring since that period vanish as the shadows of dreams. It seems to him that he is the child again. The mother of his holy youth re-appears in the eyes of his soul a bright apparition from the unclouded morning of his life; and she who first spoke to him of God, in words

softer than music to his ears, now seems to speak to him again; and that calm sweet face, which was the first holy object he recognised on earth, now seems to smile anew upon him. In the light of that smile doubts vanish, unbelief disappears, faith returns, the ice within his heart melts, tears flow, hope revives,—he prays; his prayer is heard, and the God of his holy childhood becomes once more his God. O mothers! be ye holy, and the impress of your holiness will stamp itself upon the lives of your children, to be transmitted to their children's children.

If the children of the Maccabees were saints and martyrs, they owe, under God, the loveliness of their sanctity and the loftiness of their courage to their heroic and saintly mother. What more sublime or touching than her exhortation to her children in the hour of their martyrdom? 'Now the mother was to be admired above measure, and worthy to be remembered by good men, who beheld her seven sons slain in the space of one day, and bore it with a good courage for the hope that she had in God; and she bravely exhorted every one of them in her own language, being



filled with wisdom.' Bending over her seventh and youngest son, as his turn came to die for the laws of God, she exclaimed: 'Have pity upon me that bore thee, and nourished thee, and brought thee up unto this age. I beseech thee, my son, look up to heaven; so thou shalt not fear this tormentor, but being made a worthy partner with thy brethren, receive death, that I may receive thee again with thy brethren.' This young man died manfully, while trusting in the Lord. And last of all, after the sons, the mother also was consumed.





### THE EARLY MARTYRS.

UNDER the olden dispensation many holy martyrs laid down their lives for the cause of truth and for the laws of God. The divine martyrdom of Calvary was sure to stir up within a host of generous hearts a readiness and a yearning to die for the love of Him who died for the love of them. The death of martyrs was to be one of the main proofs of Christian truth. Heroism was the prominent trait in the character of that mighty people—the Roman nation—who had subdued the world by the loftiness of their daring. By a providential design the Christian faith revealed itself to their eyes in the light of a sublime heroism—that of the early martyrs. The glories of the ancient heroes of Rome paled as stars in daylight, in presence of the superhuman courage of the Christian martyrs. This great and noble

people were amazed and perplexed at first, and finally converted, by the display of a fortitude which evidently Heaven alone could inspire. They were familiar with death under every form on battle-field and in forum, but nowhere had they witnessed anything like the death of the Christian martyrs. That light in their faces—that wisdom on their lips—that calm in presence of the fiercest torments—that longing to die—that charity of each towards his companions in chains—their conversation with one another, so unearthly, yet so sweet and brotherly—their mysterious utterances concerning a Creator, a Redeemer, a Judge who was to come in the clouds of heaven with power and majesty—their hopes openly expressed of an immense reward, a mighty weight of glory at hand—their allusions to imperishable crowns and everlasting kingdoms—their canticles of joy and thanksgiving as their end drew nigh; but, above all, the superhuman power of forgiveness which they so visibly and cordially exercised towards the very executioners who were inflicting the most ferocious cruelties upon them:—all this revealed to the wondering eyes of the Roman people a type of soul-grandeur,

such as they had never seen nor heard of. 'Who can these Christians be?' would they exclaim. 'But lately they were our companions—our equals—yea, some were once our slaves. But now their presence dazzles us—their courage amazes us—their knowledge confounds us—their utterances strike terror into the hearts of our tribunes and our princes. What is the secret of these, their god-like attributes? Can it be that one word which they are ever pronouncing? When they speak it their faces brighten, and they become more and more like gods. It is the name of Him whom our governor in Judea, Pontius Pilate, condemned to be crucified. Surely if His name works such wonders in them, Jesus of Nazareth must truly be what they say He is, the Son of God.'

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THE CHILDREN MARTYRS.

BUT if the courage of the veteran martyrs appeared to the thoughtful Roman people as a something divine, how their amazement must have increased in presence of the youthful mar-

tyrs of the early Church! The prophet had declared of old, that out of the lips of infants the glory of the divine name should be proclaimed in the presence of the enemies of God. Again and again has this prophecy been accomplished by holy and heroic children. The blood of children was the first shed for the name of Jesus; and as time went on, we find children carrying away some of the fairest palms and brightest crowns from the field of martyrdom. These children martyrs stood in presence of death, not with the stern defiant glance of the hero of earthly warfare, but with soft sweet faces looking up to heaven; they speaking the while from eye and feature, as well as from lip and heart, to God. And they whom yesterday the falling of a leaf or the sudden flight of a bird would have startled, are now unmoved by the roar of the lion which is soon to be let loose upon them, or the crackling of the flames into which they are to be flung. Their blood is flowing—one is under the paw of the lion, another in the midst of the flames, a third is being mutilated limb after limb. Has the smile vanished from their faces? No; it is then pure and radiant as ever. Is their prayer hushed?

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No; it has not suffered even a distraction. Mark! their faces brighten. Listen! the whispers of their prayers become softer and more musical. What signifies this beautiful change? It is death. It is heaven. The kingdom of glory and the crown of beauty are already theirs.





### CHRISTIAN VIRGINS.

THE Christian era having dawned upon the earth, new laws are proclaimed. Mysteries hidden until then are revealed, and virtues scarcely known before, even by name, become household words upon the lips of Christians. Among the virtues which the teaching and example of Jesus brought out into special prominence was that of holy chastity. An alliance had taken place between the human body and the very substance of God in the Person of the WORD MADE FLESH. Henceforth the practice of chastity assumes a stricter and a holier type than it had taken before the Incarnation. 'Glorify and bear God in your body.' 'The temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.' Such are the admonitions of the Holy Ghost concerning our bodily sanctification.

The highest, the holiest, most heaven-like

form which holy chastity assumes is that of consecrated virginity. Chastity is honourable in the married state; but if we would contemplate it in all its lustre and in its angel-like beauty, we must consider it in the state of consecrated virginity. Holy virginity is the joint production of brightest faith and of purest and most heroic love. Faith is incipient glory. Strong and simple faith produces dispositions akin to those which the sight of God in heaven will produce. The soul entering heaven, and seeing God for the first time, forgets suddenly and for ever all the grandeurs and beauties of earth. Seeing before her entranced gaze the all-perfect and infinitely beautiful One, she seeks instantly to be one with Him. She gives herself to Him, and He gives Himself to her.

The donation of self, of one's whole self, to God by the vow of virginity is an anticipation of the donation of self to God, which takes place when heaven is reached. Faith and love produce the former, sight and love produce the latter. As there is a place marked out for holy virgins in the worship and the following of the Lamb in heaven, so was there to be a place marked out in the worship of the Lamb



on earth for the virgin choir. The Lamb was to abide on earth until the end of the world, and to every land was He to travel under eucharistic guise. But behold how choir after choir of virgins springs up around Him to sing the new canticle, and to accompany Him wheresoever He goes! Observe too, as stalls on earth are left vacant by holy virgins who are called to join the choirs of heaven above, how other chaste young souls are led by the Holy Spirit to fill up the empty places, and join in singing the new canticle. Every age and every land, and well nigh every Christian home, have been laid under contribution in furnishing first-fruits to God and to the Lamb; holy virgins, whose one occupation is the service of Him who stands slain upon the altar; whether adoring before His throne, or accompanying Him on His journeys of love, mercy, and compassion.





### ST. AGNES, VIRGIN MARTYR.

EVERY virtue was to have its martyrs. There have been martyrs of patience, martyrs of charity, martyrs of zeal, and martyrs who have won the double crown of virginity and martyrdom. Though they may be counted by tens of thousands, those who bear in heaven the red stole of martyrdom over the white robe of virginity, yet there is one memory that comes prominently before the mind whenever the title of virgin martyr is named: it is that of the blessed Agnes. If we would fain know of what great things the young heart is capable when it generously corresponds with grace, we have but to read that page of holy story on which is recorded the short but glorious life of that marvellous child. Thirteen summers had not yet shed their light upon her path, when she became the confessor of purity and of faith.

Reason and grace dawned together upon her virgin soul, and each increased so rapidly in its own brightness, that at a time of life when others were but playful children, her mind had already reached the maturity of clearest judgment. The words of the prophet might then be applied to her ; she had an understanding beyond the ancients.

Fair was Agnes in outward form—so fair and serenely beautiful was she, that one could behold, as it were, in this youthful virgin and saint an image of the risen and glorified beauty of the human body transformed and made like to Jesus. The beauty of Jesus risen from the dead shall one day be ours. When we shall see Him, we shall become like to Him. Agnes saw Jesus in the vision of her marvellous faith, and she became like to Him. The sight of Jesus even by faith produces the resemblance to Him. The more the disciple keeps looking at the Master, the more the child keeps gazing on the Father, the more the spouse keeps her eyes fixed on the Beloved, the more the resemblance to Jesus grows and becomes intensified. Agnes never fixed her gaze but upon one object, never dwelt with unchanging thought but

upon one object, never gave her heart's love in whole or in part but to one object—that one object was Jesus. To Him was she drawn, to Him was she impelled, after Him she ran, to become His bride she dared to aspire. It seemed to her as if Jesus spoke to her heart, saying: I will espouse thee to Myself; arise, make haste, and come. And she replied: 'Behold, I come quickly; show me Thy face, and let Thy voice sound in my ears; for Thy voice is sweet, and Thy face is comely.' As the youthful Agnes consecrated her virginity to Jesus, we may suppose the angelic choirs to have chanted forth these words of holy psalmody: 'After her many virgins shall be brought to the King; they shall be brought in gladness and rejoicing to the temple of the King.'

The devotedness of Agnes to Jesus her Spouse was to be put to the test. Unholy eyes have fallen upon the sainted child. At her feet she has rich offerings. They are presented by one who would become the rival of Jesus within her heart. She spurns such gifts from her. They serve but to remind her of the infinitely more precious graces her own

Beloved has conferred upon her. 'Away from me,' would she say; 'take away these germs of iniquity, these poisoned gifts. My Beloved has placed a bracelet on mine arm and a necklace around my neck, studded with pearls of inestimable price. He has clothed me with garments of golden texture, He has shown to me the immense treasures which shall be mine if I remain faithful to Him. He is Lord of my young heart, and I can admit no other suitor. To Him am I already bound by a chain of love. Who can be found generous and powerful as He? Who so beautiful, who so winning in words? Milk and honey are upon His lips. His Mother is a virgin. His Father is God. Angels obey Him. The sun and the moon marvel at His loveliness. The fragrance of His breath gives life to the dead; the touch of His hand heals every infirmity. His abundance never faileth, His riches never decrease. To Him do I cling with all devotedness; loving Him, I remain chaste; embracing Him, I continue pure; wedded to Him, I am the virgin still.'

The Prefect's son, whose advances Agnes thus nobly repelled, enlisted the authority of

his father on his side. Promises, and flattery, and intimidation, all were employed in vain to gain the consent of the holy Agnes to become the bride of the Pagan youth; but nothing could detach her from her plighted fidelity to Jesus, the only love of her heart. Thanks to the torrent of persecution let loose upon her, she was accused of being a Christian. She is summoned before the Prefect, the indignant father of the youth whose proposals she had rejected. 'Renounce,' said the Prefect to the holy child, 'renounce the Christian superstition, and offer sacrifice to the goddess Vesta, or I shall give orders that you be led away at once to a place of public vice, there to be branded with disgrace.' Then Agnes replied with great firmness, 'If you did but know who my God is, you would not speak thus. Relying on the power and the goodness of my Saviour Jesus Christ, I despise your threats. I will not offer sacrifice to your vain idols; and my angel, who is at my side, will preserve my virginal purity from your wicked designs.' The Prefect, irritated by these noble words, ordered her garments rudely to be torn from the shoulders of this Christian child, that, stripped of

her modest vesture, she might be exposed to the vulgar gaze. When Agnes heard the wicked orders given, her spirit rose equal to the emergency. With her whole heart she prayed to her Jesus to screen her from that shame. Her prayer was heard. Presently her beautiful hair, by a miraculous growth, thickened and lengthened until it reached her feet, and became, as it were, a garment of glory all around her. While she continued to pray, a vesture of pearly whiteness was dropped by angels' hands upon her shoulders. Being led to a place of infamy, that melancholy haunt of crime became suddenly brilliant with a celestial light, which shone vividly from the spot where Agnes knelt in prayer. By order of the Prefect no Christian was allowed to succour, or even to approach her; but full license was given to the Pagan youths, who flocked around the spot, to offer her insult. As they approached her one by one, each was dazzled by the ray of marvellous light which shone from her brow. They fell prostrate on the ground, awe-stricken by the presence of her protecting angel, who stood robed in majesty at her side. The Prefect's son, the wicked youth

who brought on the innocent child all this persecution, mocking at what he called the cowardice of his companions in failing to approach Agnes, rushed towards her himself. The cry of Agnes went up to Jesus for protection. Her cry was heard in a manner she expected not, for the impious youth was struck dead by the hand of God. The news of this appalling visitation quickly spread through Rome. The Prefect, hearing of the catastrophe, rushed into the presence of Agnes, and accusing her of causing his son's death, asked how it happened. Agnes made reply: 'As your son was in the act of raising his sacrilegious hand against me, the angel of the Lord, appointed by Him to watch over me, suddenly struck him dead.' The Prefect exclaimed: 'I will believe in the truth of your words, if, by your prayers, you can obtain the restoration of my son to life.' 'Impious man,' replied the intrepid Agnes, 'your unbelief deserves not so great a favour; but the hour has come to manifest the power of my Lord Jesus Christ. Let all go forth from this place, that I may pray alone and undisturbed to my God.' When Agnes was quite alone, she prostrated herself



to the ground, and beseeched the Lord, with tears, to restore the young man to life. While she prayed, her holy angel appeared to her with the assurance that her prayer was granted: and presently the young man was restored to life. The resuscitated youth was no longer a Pagan. The same miraculous power which raised his body from the dead infused faith into his soul. His first act was to give praise to the true God in a loud voice for the divine goodness manifested in his regard, and he then addressed the astonished crowd in these words: 'Roman citizens, I charge you to believe that Christ is the one true and eternal God, with the Father and the Holy Ghost. It is He who reigns eternally, and holds in His hands the sceptre of the kingdom of heaven. His power extendeth over the universe, and His goodness ruleth over all creatures. To Him be praise, adoration, and love. It was He who struck me with a sudden death in the midst of my crimes and wicked designs; but His great mercy has had compassion on me, and, moved by the prayers of the virgin Agnes, He has restored me to life.' The astonished spectators broke out into cries of joy, giving glory

to God, and blessing His name in a concert of united praises. The priests of the false gods, excited by Satan, stirred up afresh a tumult against Agnes. They accused her falsely of magic and other crimes. They cried aloud that she deserved death because of her contempt for their gods. The Prefect now was anxious to deliver Agnes from the hands of her enemies. The miracle wrought by her in raising his son to life had opened his eyes to the truth of the Christian faith; but unable to quell the storm which he himself had raised, he withdraws sorrowfully from the scene. Aspasius was the name of the cruel judge before whom Agnes was accused anew, and by whom she was condemned to be burnt alive. Cast into the flames, they approached her not, but fell back from her on every side. The fire, which refused to touch the holy virgin, consumed instantaneously many of her pagan persecutors. Agnes, feeling that the hour was approaching when she was to lay down her life for Him Whom she loved above all things, addressed this prayer to Heaven: 'Father of the Eternal Word, I give Thee thanks for having preserved me, through Jesus Christ my

Lord and Saviour, from the snares of wicked men. Thou hast enabled me to walk firmly and untouched in the midst of the flames. Already I behold that in which I have believed — I possess that for which I had hoped — I hold fast that for which I have so ardently longed. Heavenly Father, I am come to Thee, the one true God, Who, with Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, liveth and reigneth for ever.' The holy virgin had scarcely finished her prayer, when, by order of the wicked judge Aspasius, the blow was struck by which the neck of the holy child was pierced, and her blood was shed in testimony of her belief and hope in Jesus, and her virginal love for Him. The parents of Agnes grieved not at her death. They joyfully bore the holy body of their martyred child to a grave formed in a pleasant nook on their own estate, not far from her former home. There, whilst watching in pious vigils through the night, they beheld Agnes, who appeared to them in bright and flowing garments, her countenance radiant with celestial beauty. She was accompanied by a troop of virgins clad in robes of golden texture, and at her side stood a lamb with fleece

white as snow. Agnes, addressing her parents, said: 'Mourn not for me as if I were dead; rather rejoice with me, for I dwell in a home of surpassing brightness, and I am united in heaven to Him Whom I loved on earth with all the affections of my soul.' Saying these words, she vanished, leaving her parents in an ecstasy of sweetest joy.

Young hearts, take courage. God, Who watched over Agnes, watches over you whilst the 'undefiled conflicts' for your souls' purity are being carried on. If miracles are needed for your preservation, Jesus will work them on your behalf, as He did for Agnes. Pray to Him with her faith and love.





### MARGUERITE HIBBERT.

SIXTEEN centuries have rolled by since the day on which the blessed Agnes dedicated herself to God as the youthful spouse of Jesus. Many are the changes which in that long lapse of time have taken place. But there is one thing which has not changed. It is the power which the love of Jesus holds over chaste young souls. Jesus is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. In our day we find the love of Jesus moving hearts to deeds as unearthly as were ever performed under its influence in bygone years. The love of Jesus would seem to delight in producing its marvels through the agency of the little ones of earth. It seldom employs the sceptre of the king, the sword of the warrior, or the pen of the philosopher for the working of its wonders. But how often

has it not employed the faith of holy children for such a purpose?

The simple story of youthful holiness which we have now to narrate contains no marvellous incidents; it sets forth no circumstances of holiness outside the ordinary track of piety, which many a devout Catholic child is at this very time pursuing. It is selected by the writer out of many similar records of youthful piety, because of his having been acquainted personally with the holy child whose name heads this chapter.

Marguerite Dorothea Tichborne Hibbert, half-sister of Bertram, the seventeenth Earl of Shrewsbury, was sent in her ninth year by her respected parents for her farther education to the celebrated school in York, which the community of the Institute of Mary founded in that city more than a century and a half ago. From that school had already gone forth many young girls bearing some of England's proudest names and titles, and graced by the charms of modern refinement, and the culture of much that was highest and purest in human knowledge, but, above all, schooled in the science of holiness.

The place was fragrant with holy memories. York of the past—the great Catholic past—

seemed as if it were astir again within the walls of this venerable convent, and the winds that swept over minster, and abbey, and holy ruin, seemed to waft daily new blessings from the old shrines upon the happy inmates of St. Marie's—pupils and sisters. The Catholic ruins of England—and nowhere is this more felt than in York—seem as if stepping-stones in the stream of ages, by which we can travel quickly from present to past, and from past to present, and convince ourselves of the wonderful identity of spirit with spirit, of worship with worship, of the ways of the holy of this period with the ways of the holy of former and remote periods in our Church's history.

The spirit of devotedness to God's glory and the good of souls, which in the days of York's first Christian splendour filled many of its ancient cloisters with the daughters of kings and princes, as well as with those of less brilliant parentage, is still attracting to the convent home of St. Marie high-born maidens, no less than those around whose home no other lustre shines than that of great personal merit and holiness, and the refinement of the educated mind and the cultivated heart.

Who more fitted for the education of the Christian child, be she daughter of prince or peasant, than those in whose lives the loftiest and purest virtues are every-day apparitions, whose examples are sweet holy teachings to the eyes and hearts of children, and whose influence, fond and attractive as that of the mother or the sister, draws the souls of little ones as quickly to the love and practice as to the knowledge of holiness?

The child needs for its progress in the ways of holiness the living and loving guide. The theory of holiness laid down in books or presented by oral advice suffices not in the absence of the breathing example of the holy life. The eyes are the first instructors of the soul. This is especially the case with regard to children. That system of education which places the child in the midst of those whom it quickly learns to revere and love, and in whom it beholds the highest intellectual gifts, combined with the deepest and tenderest piety, cannot but tend easily to develop all that is good in the child's heart, and draw the young soul on from virtue to virtue. Such is the conventual system of education. Under this



system heaven is kept before the young pupil's gaze as the final goal of every thought and act. She is, at the same time, admirably trained up for every walk of life in which it may be her lot to travel in her heavenward course. All useful branches of worldly knowledge, and all necessary accomplishments, are communicated by those who had themselves often moved in the highest circles. The acquirements of science and literature are thus imbibed from filtered sources, and the young mind is preserved from the poison which is so often mixed up with human teaching. The child, leaving home and commencing its educational career, finds another home in which it will preserve its individuality, and feel that it is the object of kindly personal sympathy, surrounded by those who sincerely rejoice in its well-being. The known sympathy of those whom we esteem and love is a powerful aid wherever a great moral effort has to be made. How wonderfully is the child encouraged in its progress to holiness, by the consciousness that there are those nigh to it who feel the liveliest interest in every step it takes in advance—upon whose counsel it can depend in its doubts

—upon whose help it can lean in its weakness, and whose hands will lift it up if it stumbles!

Such was the spirit of that second home where the few closing years of the short but holy life of Marguerite Hibbert were to be spent. She entered St. Marie's, York, in her ninth year, as has been stated, and she left it for heaven in her thirteenth year. Our narrative of her life refers only to the four years which preceded her beautiful death. What can be said of a child so young? What circumstance worth recording could have taken place during this brief period of school-day life? Things are often great in the eyes of God—nay, very great—of which the world takes little notice. What grander design can enter the human soul than the prospect of aspiring to holiness of life? All other projects are vain and empty. It became visible to all who intimately approached the youthful Marguerite, after her arrival at St. Marie's, that the leading desire of her young heart was to become holy. She set about the accomplishment of this desire with a wisdom inspired by the Holy Ghost. Her first object was to dis-

cover the root of all her childish defects, for the purpose of thoroughly eradicating them.

*Her generous efforts to discover and overcome her faults.*

Marguerite was not faultless. She was naturally indolent, of an imperious temper, sprightly and vivacious, often to excess, so as to cause pain to her companions. She was also of a meddling disposition, and inclined to dictate to those around her; very restless and unwilling to apply herself to her studies, and to submit to school discipline of any sort. But underlying all these natural obstacles to her sanctification there was in the centre of her soul an ardent desire of becoming pleasing in the eyes of God and of conquering every defect in thought, speech, or manner, to which she was subject. Most children shrink from being told of their faults; but Marguerite, on the contrary, would beg and implore of her school superiors, and even of her companions, to admonish her when they saw anything in her behaviour worthy of blame. This readiness to receive correction was not the prompting of nature but of grace. A venerable religious, who had many years' experience in the educa-

tion of youth, and who had an occasional opportunity of seeing Marguerite, said: 'If I want a feast for my soul, I have only to correct Marguerite Hibbert. After a correction or humiliation she appears to be devoid of all resentment, and as loving and as obliging as are ordinary good children when some favour has been conferred on them.' On such occasions the countenance of Marguerite would retain its usual sweet composure, and her lips would move in silent prayer, whilst in her heart she was joyfully offering to God her little trial. This humble bearing under correction was the result of a deliberate resolution, which she had generously adopted and courageously carried out. We find written with her own hand amongst her papers the following resolutions: 'I will cordially acknowledge my faults, and ask that superior in whom I have most confidence to tell me of my faults, and I will thank her when she has done so.'

*Her humility.*

This readiness to acknowledge her faults proceeded from her deep humility. There is no virtue so little known or less practised than

true humility; yet there is no virtue more necessary for our sanctification. It is the source of all virtues. God looks upon nothing as holy or good which does not proceed from humility. It is the true criterion by which real virtue may be distinguished from that which is false or showy. The humble alone are to be exalted into the glory of heaven, and none shall be saved but those who humble themselves as little children. Such was the teaching of Jesus Christ; a teaching which was incomprehensible in His day to the proud of heart, and which is incomprehensible still to the children of the world. Whenever our Blessed Lord purposes to exalt a soul very high in virtue, He commences His work by laying deep foundations of humility in the heart. The deep humility of Marguerite Hibbert was the result of an extraordinary grace, and the evident fore-sign of extraordinary sanctity. She was truly humble under circumstances which would have rendered it impossible for her to be such, if God had not intervened in her behalf by special grace, and if she had not generously coöperated with that grace. She was naturally proud and imperious. She

was possessed of rare gifts of mind and great personal beauty. High birth, ample fortune, and the love and admiration of all who knew her, were dangerous incentives to vanity, pride, and a love of the world. To be humble and unworldly under such circumstances is a proof that heavenly agencies were at work within her soul, and that a glory higher than anything on this earth was the object of her ambition. Quickly understanding and feeling the necessity of humility, she set about the work of becoming truly humble in the most enlightened and practical manner. She kindled in her soul a very ardent desire for this great virtue. Trusting in divine grace she resolved to become humble. Hers was a fixed and unwavering resolution. She committed it to writing in these words: 'I will try now to become profoundly humble. I will earnestly strive to pull down that pride of which I am so full. I will yield my will to my superiors and to my companions, as I know that will humble me.' To these practical resolutions she united fervent prayer for the acquisition of this virtue. From her heart and lips these words often went up to Jesus Christ, whom she so tenderly

loved: 'Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like to Thine.' Not satisfied with praying herself for the gift of true humility, she used to entreat her companions to join her in praying for this virtue. In a letter written by her to a schoolfellow the following passage occurs: 'You say that I ought to pray for humility; I do; but for all that I insist on your praying for it for me, who choke with pride. Do then pray that I may be humble, and that our beloved superioress may humble me, that is myself, to the dust.' She had a profound contempt for the grandeurs of the world. She often meditated on the shortness of life, on the body in the grave, and on the soul before the judgment seat. With such meditations she fostered the spirit of humility within her breast.

So great was the deep hold which this spirit had gained upon her heart, that even on the bed of sickness she would forget the thought of her malady in the longing she felt to gain perfection in humility. Seeing one day at her side the sister who had charge of the schools, she said to her, in her own simple, touching way: 'Sister, will you promise that when I

get down to the school again you will humble me?' What a contrast we find here presented in the sentiments of this holy child to the murmurings of those whom the passing sickness excludes from the pleasures and vanities to which they are attached!

*Her patience under trials.*

On the journey of perfection there is a Calvary for each individual soul, there is a Passion-tide for every devout one, when the heavy cross has to be borne, almost without any sensible aid from Heaven. Christ crucified is the ideal of Christian holiness. The truly devout soul is haunted by the image of the Crucified. Seeing Him on His Cross, she is troubled if she finds herself without a cross. If the cross is seen in the distance, she watches its approach with serene, yea with joyous countenance; she represses all the repugnances of nature; she goes forth to meet it with the salutation, 'Ave crux!' on her lips. If the cross should fall upon her suddenly, human nature may shudder under the first shock, sighs may escape from her, and tears may fall; but presently the spirit conquers the flesh, grace overcomes nature. A feeling, a certainty, grows



upon her that Jesus is near—very near to her, by reason of that cross. She feels that He has not indeed *sent* it to her, but that He has *brought* it to her *Himself*, and that He will remain as long as the cross remains, sanctifying her, enriching her, making her more and more like to Himself in suffering, in order to entitle her to become like to Himself in glory. Full of these high and holy thoughts, the servants of God have rejoiced even in their tribulation. The beauty of holy patience appears with softest and purest lustre in the lives of the sainted young. It blends in harmonising colours with the cloudless innocence of youth, as sunbeams in pure skies. When youth—so sensitive of pain, and so prone to make complaint—can suffer for God and look cheerful, and be silent, then we may feel quite sure that some powerful grace is working within the heart. Silence and sweetness of countenance were ever the accompaniments of those trials which befell the sainted child whose memoir we are writing. Margaret had to encounter exterior and interior trials. She had to endure the opposition and petty criticism of companions to whom her life appeared too strict and un-earthly. It could not be expected that in a large

school some, at least, would not be found less virtuous than the others. To such imperfect souls such an example of holiness as that presented by the humble Margaret would appear in an unfavourable light. From such companions the gentle child suffered much ; but she never made complaint of anything said or done against her. When criticising or contemptuous remarks were addressed to her, there was no struggle on her part with wounded feelings. It is true that she would be deeply pained ; but in her thirst to suffer for Jesus, she drank the pain silently into her soul, and its effect appeared neither in speech, nor look, nor manner. On one occasion only was she heard to allude to the humiliating remarks addressed to her. It was when one of her companions in fervour shared in a humiliation with her ; turning to her with an encouraging smile, she said : ‘ Let us offer it all to our dear Lord.’ God permitted these trials—the greatness of which we must not measure by the trials which we ourselves suffer in more mature years—to befall this holy child for the purpose, no doubt, of giving her opportunities of gaining the special merit of suffering borne for justice’ sake, and also of display-

ing, for the edification of others, the greatness of her soul under tribulation. There are many virtues in the soul which only appear in times of great personal suffering. Our holy friends become fully known to us only in the hour of some crushing sorrow. As stars invisible in sunlight, so were their highest qualities hidden from us until the dark night of affliction arrived. Then came they forth in all their lofty brightness, revealing beauties of character and heroism of soul, of the existence of which we had not been even remotely cognisant. The quiet bearing of Marguerite under tribulation was the result, not of temperament, but of special grace. By temperament she was ardent and exceedingly sensitive. Consequently her holy, calm, and angel-like meekness under crosses and contradictions could not have come from natural dispositions. Wisely had she forestalled the advent of trials and humiliations by adopting such generous resolves as the following: 'I resolve from this day, the eve of my confirmation, to suffer every little cross and unkind word with meekness. I will bear persecutions, affronts, and insults, and everything else they try to do to me, with courage, as a soldier of Jesus Christ. Let me fight

battles for our Lord. Let me not be discouraged or give up like a coward. Come, O Holy Spirit, heal the infirmities of my soul ; bless, I beseech thee, these resolutions, which I place under the protection of the Blessed Trinity. Through Jesus Christ. Sept. 30, 1852.'

Marguerite was in her tenth year when she formed in her heart and committed to writing these resolutions, which the Spirit of God alone could have inspired. The unwearied patience and meekness of Marguerite at last conquered the opposition of those who had taken part against her, and opened their eyes to her real merits and holiness. Once undeceived in her regard, their minds and hearts filled quickly with esteem and admiration of her great virtues, and from being her opponents they became her associates in many of her works of piety.

The following testimony to Marguerite's holiness was written by one, who with humble candour blames herself for the pain she had caused to the gentle child before she had learned to love her as she merited : ' When Marguerite joined us in the first school, I was jealous of the preference shown to my saintly companion, and my pride could not bear that

one so young should be associated with us who were so much older than herself. I therefore treated her for some months in a very unkind and uncharitable manner. Likewise, partly through human respect and partly through envy, I made many remarks against her. During all this time she behaved towards me in the most kind and sisterly manner possible, and never afterwards alluded, even indirectly, to my unkind conduct towards her. After some time I changed my ideas on many points, and began to appreciate her noble qualities, so that we became the greatest friends from that time to the period of her saintly death. I had many opportunities of admiring her virtues, and never, during the whole course of our companionship, do I remember having heard her say an uncharitable word. On the contrary, her every action proved that she looked on her companions as her sisters, and was united to them by sweet bonds of charity. I was often lost in admiration of the virtues and holiness of my dear little companion. Frequently did her words inspire me with the ardent desire to become virtuous and holy like her.'

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But the chief trials of Marguerite were those which she suffered interiorly in the depths of her soul, in her warfare against the obstacles to her sanctification. Discovering within her own breast many hindrances to perfection, she battled against them until she finally won that victory, which is the most difficult to be gained, self-conquest.

*Her strict self-scrutiny.*

The more we study the life of this holy child, the more we find reason for admiring the practical wisdom she displayed in the pursuit of holiness. To learn to know herself, and to become acquainted with every exterior and interior defect of manners or dispositions, seemed to be her first object. We find her seeking for the admonitions of her superiors in order to learn from them every fault they remarked in her. She would also beg of her companions in their charity to be equally plain-spoken, and she would thank them with the sweetest smile for discovering her imperfections. She knew well that exterior propriety of behaviour would be of no value before God, unless it was accompanied by a

corresponding purity of heart and conscience. She bore constantly in mind the words of the Prophet, 'All the beauty of the King's daughter is from within;' and she laboured with all earnestness to acquire interior beauty of soul. To gain the self-knowledge necessary to this end she employed three principal means: earnest prayer, strict self-examination, and the counsel of her spiritual director. With prolonged and most devout prayers she would ask light from the Holy Spirit to enable her to know herself. By the following extract from her manuscripts we discover with what care and method, with what a knowledge of the mysteries of the spiritual life and of human nature, she carried out the work of self-examination. The quotation is dated September 1854, when she was only in her twelfth year:

‘POINTS FOR INTERIOR EXAMINATION.

‘*On our duties towards God.*—Prayer public and private. The Sacraments. Sermons. Instructions. Spiritual reading. Meditation. Respect in the chapel and during all spiritual

duties. Purity of intention. Presence of God. Union with God. Examen of conscience.

*'On the duties to superiors.*—Obedience, respect, docility, diligence. Rash judgments of superiors. Detracting conversation of superiors. Compliance with school duties.

*'On duties to equals.*—Example in words and actions. Leading others in any way to offend God, or to disobedience against superiors.

*'On duties to self.*—Pride. Predominant passion. In what virtue most deficient. What causes most sins. What efforts made to overcome evil propensities, and to acquire virtue. What self-denial practised. What mortification habitually performed. Whether advanced or gone back since last retreat. What devotion practised towards the Blessed Sacrament, to the ever-blessed Virgin, to St. Joseph, to Angel Guardian and Patron Saints.

*'On earnestness for salvation.*—Earnestness in spiritual duties. If accessory to any want of it in others. The principal obstacles in the way of salvation. The general subject of your conversation; good or bad. Human respect. Duties of our state. Ask the priest to point



out what hinders your progress in the way of salvation.'

God crowned with entire success the generous and unwearied efforts of the humble Marguerite to overcome her faults and acquire the contrary virtues. From being proud and sensitive, she became most humble and patient. From being imperious and unwilling to conform to discipline, she became most submissive and punctual in observing every regulation of the school, and every injunction of parent or superior.

She arrived now at such a point of Christian perfection, that months would pass, and those who had been the most strict observers of her conduct could not discover the trace of a fault in her deportment during that period. It was otherwise in the lowly view she took of herself. She was ever discovering faults and blemishes in her words and actions; and whilst others were full of admiration at witnessing such exalted virtue in so young a child, her own soul was humbled and full of confusion at the thought of the many imperfections she discovered in herself. It has ever

been so with the great servants of God. They seem to forget altogether the good that is in them, and the great things that have been done by them, to remember only their own shortcomings, and their deficiencies.

*Her dread of sin.*

The gentle Marguerite was penetrated by so lively a fear of offending God, or of causing others to offend Him, that for days together she would suffer great interior trouble after doing or saying something which she apprehended might have had a tendency to imperfection or disedification. This over-sensitiveness of conscience was a continued cross which God allowed her to bear for her greater merit. As a proof of the horror with which she regarded everything by which God is displeased, we may narrate a circumstance referred to by a school-companion in a letter written shortly after Marguerite's happy death : ' It happened once that I had displeased a superior, without, however, having committed any grave fault. Not knowing how to extricate myself from the difficulty, I expressed a wish that I were really in disgrace with her, that I might be able to

beg her pardon, and consequently arrange all more easily than I could do under existing circumstances. The holy Marguerite, overhearing this, said with an energy and fervour which I have never forgotten, "O, no, you do not wish this, I am sure; for in that case you would have offended our Lord, and now, perhaps, you have not done so."

*Her fear and love of God.*

The holy fear of God, being, as the Divine Spirit tells us, the beginning of wisdom, is ever found in the saintly soul; sweetened, it is true, by hope and love, yet keen and searching oftentimes. The soul of Marguerite was smitten with this blessed fear. One day, talking to her companion, she said, 'I desire to die, but I greatly dread Purgatory.' 'O,' replied her friend, 'when you get there you will no longer offend God, and you will be certain some day to possess Him.' 'Yes, I know that,' Marguerite replied, 'but at judgment I shall get some better idea of what God is; and then to be banished from Him, for you know not how long—O, how tormenting to me is this thought!'

Separation from God seemed to the loving

soul of Marguerite to be, as it truly is, the greatest of the pains of Purgatory. The more a soul loves God on earth, the more she dreads even the briefest delay in being united to Him after death.

The love of God was the one great passion of the soul of Marguerite. It burned as a great fire within her breast, inflaming her every thought, and word, and act. It first played upon the *green wood*, and then upon the *dry wood* within her soul. It acted first upon her imperfect nature, which it purged of its dross, and cleansed and transfigured; then it seized upon her purified soul, and therein kindled fires that were ever to burn with seraphic ardour and brightness. Her love of God manifested itself in various touching ways. She delighted to hear Him spoken of. In these terms a sister of St. Mary's community, who had special charge of Marguerite, writes on this matter: 'The constant efforts made by this dear child to advance in perfection were blessed by Almighty God, and she progressed very quickly in His divine love. Her little heart seemed to overflow when spoken to of God and of His love. On such occasions she would remain perfectly silent, her

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countenance beaming with delight; and at last, as if unable any longer to bear the excess of holy joy she experienced in hearing God spoken of, she would seize any devout emblem that happened to be nigh, and pressing it almost convulsively to her lips, would turn abruptly away. It was impossible, when speaking to her on some pious subject, not to feel one's own inferiority, and to desire to love God as she did. As she thought the angels excel in love, she was very devout to them, especially to the Seraphim, as she imagined they are consumed with more burning ardours.' Marguerite related to a pious friend, that when quite a little one, being restless sometimes at night, she would pass hour after hour in uniting herself to the Seraphim in making acts of the love of God. The voice of that holy child worshipping in the stillness of the night must have speedily become music in heaven. There is something specially sweet and solemn, yet sad withal, about midnight prayer. The Prophet rose at midnight to pray, and he invites us in the nights to lift up our hands in the holy places, and to bless the Lord. The spouse in the Canticle sought her Beloved in the night, and Jesus was wont

to spend the lonely hours of night in prayer. Holy Church continues the work of midnight psalmody in many a hallowed solitude. There is a deep sadness, the sadness of Gethsemani, about the midnight song of Holy Church. She weeps while she sings. *Weeping she weeps in the night, and tears are on cheeks*, for the vision of the sins of the world is before her. At night the world puts forth its chief power of sinning. Then do these gatherings take place, during which Jesus is denied, betrayed, laughed at, struck on the face, scourged, crowned with thorns, crucified, buried, and forgotten. The midnight devotions of her saints are the reparation she offers, night after night, before the throne of God, for the midnight sins of the world. But whilst she thus seeks to repair the insults offered to God, she obtains the conversion of many sinners. The loving aspirations of the gentle Marguerite, whilst ascending from her pure and watchful heart in the stillness of the night, as sweet fragrance before the altar of the Lamb, were falling back, perhaps, also as showers of grace upon some poor worldly soul, the instrument of whose conversion God had appointed her to become.

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*Her purity of intention.*

The love of God is a fire that purifies the inner heart, by burning all dross of earth out of every crevice and recess. Under its action all intentions and designs that are merely human and earthly quickly disappear, to give place to one sole intention, that of doing everything to please God. The true love of God ever produces perfect purity of intention. In its turn purity of intention feeds the furnace of divine love with a continual supply of fuel. Everything it touches become spiritual firewood, which quickly ignites into flames of burning love. The pure intention by itself, even before a single word or act has proceeded from it, gives glory to God, and deserves an endless recompense. Some have become great saints who did little more for God than to keep alive within their souls a ceaseless and ardent desire to please Him. Such was the one abiding desire of Marguerite's heart. The following resolution penned by her hand bears testimony to the intensity with which it glowed within her breast: 'I resolve to do all my actions for one only intention—that intention is, to do all for the love of

God. Every action we perform to please God, even the meanest, will add to our crown in heaven.' The gentle child had no opportunity of performing great and startling deeds; but these were not required to fill her days with merit before God, who judges not by the bulk or size or show of our works, but by the amount of purity of intention with which we perform them.

*Her devotion to the Incarnation and Passion.*

Her devotion to the mystery of the Incarnation made itself manifest in many touching ways. One of her intimate companions writes of her: 'In listening to Marguerite speaking of the loveliness of the Infant Jesus, and on other such subjects, I was often lost in admiration. Her countenance on such occasions seemed to glow with a heavenly fire.' It was her practice, at the approach of Christmas, to prepare a spiritual crib within her heart for the Infant Jesus. . At the commencement of the last Advent she spent on earth, she said to a friend: 'I do not intend to have my heart a cold stable for my Infant Lord at Christmas. I mean to have a crib; will you also have one?' Her friend



assented, and Marguerite often playfully said to her, 'I mean to have my crib better than yours;' thus sweetly and cheerfully urging her young friend to a holy rivalry in the blessed work of making interior preparation for the coming of Jesus. We find written by herself a list of the virtues with which she wished to decorate her spiritual crib: humility, the love of humiliations, and the acceptance of them, silence and recollection, contrition, obedience, self-denial, docility, confidence, innocence, purity of intention, diligence in prayer.

From an early age Marguerite had a tender devotion to the Passion of our Lord. A religious of the York community writes thus on this matter: 'From a child Marguerite was tenderly affected to the Passion of our Lord; and on His sacred wounds her grateful mind loved to dwell. A few months after she came to school, she told me she wished to have a crucifix resembling those the nuns wear at their beads, and that she was determined to choose one if a recompense were awarded her. She was fortunate in this respect, and with delight she received a small crucifix, which from that time became her constant companion, and her

treasure. She never forgot to take it with her on her retiring to rest ; and often did this dear child call me to her side, to show me her crucifix reposing on her bosom, and which sometimes she offered me to kiss. I was often ashamed of my own coldness and tepidity, in witnessing such holy ardours in so young a child. As she increased in years so did she in love for her crucifix. Towards the close of her short life her crucifix was alternately in her pocket, or in her desk in the school. In passing from one class to another, whilst apparently looking for books in her desk, she was relieving her loving heart by affectionate kisses of the image of her crucified Spouse. In the refectory, after concluding her earthly repast, she took out her treasure from her pocket, and hiding it as she thought with a book, she regaled her soul with amorous embraces of her much-loved crucifix ; which now lies clasped in her dear little hands in the silent tomb, where she awaits a glorious resurrection.'

*Her devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.*

A name is given to Jesus in prophecy full of deep and beautiful meaning. He is called

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Emmanuel, which signifies God with us. It is by His Eucharistic presence especially that our Lord fulfils the prophecy contained in this name. He is present as Man-God in the Holy Eucharist, in every portion of His Church, from the rising to the setting of the sun. The inhabitants of every corner of the Christian world can now with truth exclaim: 'The Word made flesh dwells among us; He is our Emmanuel, God with us.' It was in view of the abiding and real presence of our Lord on earth, even until the end of the world, that the Holy Ghost imparted to human hearts so vehement a love of Jesus. Loving Him as we must needs do, if we yield to the force of the Holy Spirit impelling us with gentle violence to His love, our hearts demand impetuously His presence — a presence as real as was that of the Child Jesus to Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem, in Nazareth, and in the Temple — a presence as substantial and as true as was that of Jesus to John in the supper-room, and as was that of Jesus risen to Magdalene in the garden. We ask for the reality, and God does not give us the shadow. No, He gives us Jesus as He was when on earth, as He is now at His

right hand in heaven. O, devout believer in the Holy Eucharist, blessed art thou! It is not flesh and blood that has revealed this lofty mystery to thee, but thy Heavenly Father. Blessed art thou for believing without seeing what the Son of God said to them, when He spoke these words, 'THIS IS MY BODY.' Blessed art thou that hast believed, for these things shall be accomplished in thy favour which the Lord hath spoken. Jesus was to be with us not simply as some benignant monarch in the midst of the multitude of His people, one in the midst of many, for He was to be the loving and intimate Companion of each one of us in particular. He was to be the Emmanuel of the individual soul. He was to be with her not merely as a memory, or as a figure, or as a spirit, but as her own Jesus, full of life and reality. He was to be with her after a form invented by Himself, which no one else could invent or imagine, of closest sweetest union, modelled on that union which exists between Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and which is called by the blessed name Communion. The first Communion of the Catholic child—the first time the Son of God enters under sacra-

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mental veil the youthful Christian breast, is an event the most important in the devout child's early history, and for which fullest and most thoughtful preparation should be made. For two years after Marguerite Hibbert entered St. Mary's school at York, the work of preparation for her first Communion was continued. The more her soul received light concerning our Lord's presence in the Blessed Sacrament, the more it panted and sighed to be united to Him in the Sacrament of His love. So desirous was she to hasten the arrival of the day of her first Communion, that she earnestly begged that she might be allowed to remain at school during vacation, in order that her preparation for that great event might not be interrupted. From prudent motives this request was not granted her. Whilst awaiting the time when her heart was to become the loving abode of the 'WORD MADE FLESH,' she sought to honour by every means in her power, as she continued always to do, the presence of Jesus in His holy Tabernacle. In her visits to the Blessed Sacrament, her lively faith in the Real Presence would show itself by her profound and angelic reverence.

A member of St. Mary's community writes thus on this subject: 'Her posture in the chapel was that of one deeply impressed with the idea of the Divine Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. It was a spectacle on which angels must have gazed with delight, to see that dear child kneeling before the altar on which Jesus reposed, importuning the God of love to come quickly to her. No religious could guard her senses with more care than she did. Persons passing in and out of the chapel never saw Marguerite's eyes raised. Her attitude in the house of God was a striking lesson to every beholder. Faith and love were depicted on her whole exterior. She embraced every opportunity of visiting her Beloved enclosed in the tabernacle; but on those days when the Holy of Holies was exposed on our altar, her loving heart expanded with further emotions of fervour. On such occasions she placed herself as near as she could to the Divine Object of her heart's affections, and vied with the seraphim in respectful adoration. Some persons remarked of her that she should be called the spouse of the Blessed Sacrament, so deep and tender was her devotion to that great mystery.'

The habit of extraordinary reverence in our Lord's sacramental presence, which Marguerite had acquired at an age so young, was not secured without serious and generous efforts on her part. Naturally she was fidgety and prone to restlessness of manner, but by continually watching over herself, and battling against this propensity, she acquired that holy calm and stillness by which her attitude in the house of God was so strikingly marked. Amongst her pious resolutions we find one, under the heading 'Respect in the Chapel and during all Spiritual Duties,' which runs thus: 'In my prayers, when tempted to turn round, as I usually am, I will beg the protection of our Lady, and of my guardian angel and patrons to help me. I know I am a soldier of Christ, and have the cross for my standard. How can I turn a coward? No, my soul! I know by the grace of God thou wilt not turn a coward. Come, O Holy Spirit, heal the infirmities of my soul.' What a series of self-conquests did not this holy child win in gaining that perfect command over her senses in the house of God, by which so much edification was given to all who beheld her there!

The great day of Marguerite's first Communion at last arrived. The good sister who was chiefly employed in instructing her thus briefly but touchingly describes that happy event: 'Easter morning might well rise brightly—never can I forget that hallowed day. The countenance of this lovely child glowed with celestial joy. From this period her ardent desire to love God perfectly daily increased.' What passed in Marguerite's soul between herself and her Jesus on that day, when He entered her breast for the first time, under sacramental species, is a secret for us, and shall be so until we hear it published in heaven. Silent and reticent though Marguerite habitually was about herself, there were times when her holy little heart was forced to speak out of its abundance—compelled, by the pressure of over-flowing feelings of tenderness and love for Jesus, to make avowals of what she felt and could not conceal. She had already gone several times to Holy Communion, when one day she said to a dear companion in confidence, 'I always imagine myself a little dove when I go to Holy Communion, and though most unworthy of doing so, I cast myself, as



such, into our Lord's Sacred Heart. This morning, after Communion, I asked our Lord to fasten round my neck a chain of gold, and to fix it in His Sacred Heart in such a way, that though I always remained with Him, I might at the same time be able also to go to our Blessed Lady, and to the angels and saints.' These words she spoke with great earnestness, and at the same time with child-like simplicity and sweetness. Her love of our Lord as an Infant often broke out in her Communion devotions. Speaking to the same companion on another occasion, she said: 'I do love to receive our dear Lord as a sweet Infant; I nurse Him, I kiss Him, I press Him to my heart.' With what divine tenderness must not her Infant Saviour and Spouse have returned these embraces!

Her pure and loving heart often directed its tender aspirations to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. As the true lovers of Jesus yearn in their hearts to draw others to His love, Marguerite felt burning within her breast an ardent zeal to lead many to the loving worship of the Sacred Heart of our Blessed Lord. With the permission of the mistress of the school,

she formed an association among her companions, consisting of nine young ladies, whose object it would be to honour the Sacred Heart of Jesus in union with the nine choirs of angels, and to seek, by their example and their prayers, to spread this beautiful devotion among many others. Marguerite was the soul of this association. She endeavoured, with all her energy, to inspire its members with devoted attachment to our Blessed Lord, and to fill their souls with her own love of His Sacred Heart.

*Her devotion to the Blessed Virgin.*

As it was through Mary, His Mother, that Jesus was first known and loved on earth, so to this hour the knowledge and love of Jesus are wonderfully fostered and developed by the agency of devotion to Mary. When England was devout to Mary, Jesus was then universally acknowledged and adored in all her cities, towns, and villages. The name of Jesus then electrified the crowd, and when it was spoken every head was bent in adoration. The symbols of His Passion then met the eye wherever one's footsteps turned. His very tomb, in the

far East, kindled in its behalf the martial enthusiasm of tens of thousands of England's noblest sons. It was then the time when the Gospel of Jesus was written with letters of gold, on illumined pages, by the hands of loving believers; and stupendous temples, erected for His worship, sprang from the earth, rivalling that of Solomon in size, beauty, and splendour. It was then the time when kings forsook their thrones for the love of Jesus, and rich men gave all they possessed to the poor to become His disciples. It was a time when the very child in its mother's arms could tell who Jesus was; for no one was ignorant of Jesus then, when all were devout to Mary. Such was England with regard to Jesus, when it bore the privileged name of 'Mary's dowry.' What is England with regard to Jesus now? If we except those on English soil by whom Mary is honoured, England is become a land where the name of Jesus has sunk to the level of a common name, and where no head is bowed in adoration when it is pronounced. Let no one, then, say that England has become more devout to Jesus by becoming less devout to Mary, for the reverse is the truth. Three

centuries ago she began by renouncing Mary, and now she has all but renounced Jesus. If we look at continental countries, we find that it is precisely where Mary is honoured that Jesus is adored. Elsewhere He is treated as a man merely, as a wise teacher at most, and benefactor of His race. But where Mary is honoured, there He is surely believed in as God, as the Redeemer of the world, as the Judge that is to come. Devotion to Mary helps us, in presence of the high mysteries of the Christian faith, as a dictionary does with reference to deep and hidden phrases—it sets them in luminous exposition before the eyes of our soul. One who is devout to Mary quickly realises the doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Redemption, and the Eucharist. As the mother who lifts her child in a crowd, high above the heads of those who are standing by, to behold some passing pageant, so Mary raises in her maternal arms the child that is devout to her, high above the heads of the magnates of the world, to gaze, with unimpeded glance, on the glorious pageant of Christian verities. Devotion to Mary, whilst filling the intelligence with spiritual light, kin-

dles within the heart the most devoted love of Jesus. The love of Jesus and the love of Mary are inseparable. If you love her you must love Him, and if you love Him you must love her. St. John is the Apostle who loved Jesus most, and he is the Apostle who loved Mary most. From his day down to this hour, the joint love of Jesus and Mary has dwelt in every saintly breast. It was so within the heart of Marguerite Hibbert. Her love of Jesus was the essence of her being—the fountain of her affections, the pulse of her every action. But she also loved Mary, as only an ardent lover of Jesus could do. She herself describes the character of her devotion to the Blessed Virgin, in words we have already quoted, and which we again recite—words which, though simple and child-like, are full of mystic beauty, and impressed with all the accuracy of Catholic thought concerning devotion to Mary. ‘I asked,’ she says, ‘our Lord to fasten a chain of gold around my neck, and to fix this chain in His Sacred Heart in such a way, that whilst I remained always with Him, I might be able also to go to our Blessed Lady.’ Is not this the manner in

which Mary is honoured in heaven by angels and saints? They abide in Jesus, but they often approach Mary to render her loving homage. Marguerite recited every day the little office of the Immaculate Conception, to which mystery she had the greatest devotion; she also paid a daily visit to our Lady's altar. She made her dear Mother Mary the confidante of all her trials, and invoked her help in all her undertakings, especially whenever she undertook to conquer a particular fault, or to acquire some special virtue. She discovered, during a retreat, that she had grown remiss for some time in performing certain devotions in honour of the Blessed Virgin, which she had previously been engaged in practising. She blames herself severely for this omission, and makes the following practical resolution: 'I will try to be more devout to my dearest Mother, never omitting to say those prayers in her honour I used to say, but which lately I had diminished for one silly reason, namely, I was afraid of what would be thought of my taking three or four books to the chapel. I will try to conquer, for the future, all human respect.' In recreation she made it a point often to speak

of her dearest Mamma in heaven, for it was thus, in the overflowing tenderness of her heart, she used to fondly entitle the Blessed Virgin. One day, in spring-tide, her school companions were engaged in sowing flower-seeds in their little gardens. Marguerite, remembering an anecdote that had been read during a spiritual lecture of some pious children, who wished to honour their sweet Mother Mary, even in the midst of their amusements, by sowing seeds in their gardens, which formed the sentence, **MARY, CAUSE OF OUR JOY**, determined to have her garden thus embellished. The religious who was in attendance on the children at recreation, finding Marguerite seriously engaged at her garden-work, inquired the cause. 'O, sister,' replied the dear child, 'I must be alone and in silence, for I am sowing our Blessed Lady's name.' Those seeds which she was then planting had not budded from the earth before the pious sower was found ripe for heaven. Her devotion to the Blessed Virgin shows itself strikingly in the following lines, written by her at the close of a retreat, which she made shortly before her death: 'O Mary, my dearest Mother, I place these resolutions

of my retreat in thy hands, and I lay them at thy feet; with them I place my heart, which I dedicate to thy love and service. Present them and me to thy Divine Son, and beg Him to accept them; obtain for me, my most beloved of mothers, the grace to keep these resolutions, and also the grace of profound humility, of silence, of an ardent charity, and of a great devotion to thyself. O dearest Mary, place me in the heart of thy beloved Son, and keep my heart so firmly sealed that no one can enter there, but with thee and by thee. To thee I give the key of the lock of my heart; grant that I may never become so unworthy of thy care and protection, that thou shouldst have to return it to me. Obtain for me perseverance and the grace of a happy death; and take me soon, very soon, to the kingdom of thy beloved Son, that so thy blessing, which I enjoy on earth, may be granted me in heaven.'

*Her obedience.*

Obedience is the test of true holiness. Where the spirit of obedience does not exist there can be no real sanctity. Angels and men have had to pass through the ordeal of this



test. Lucifer and Adam fell by disobedience. Our Lord's obedience unto death became the source of the world's redemption. The individual soul is to be sanctified and saved by catching up the spirit of the obedience of Jesus, and living by it. As obedience was to be the indispensable means of salvation for every soul, to each one is given the opportunity of practising it. The providence of God has so arranged it, that each one should find some superior, whom he is bound to obey, no matter what his position in life may be. We find superiors appointed for us in the domestic, in the civil, and in the spiritual order of things. The Catholic Church is one grand system of spiritual obedience. This obedience does not interfere with individual liberty, in its high and proper sense, no more than the obedience which angels and saints give to God in heaven interferes with their individual freedom. Obedience guides, enlightens, sanctifies, and sustains the individual will, but does not crush it. So soon as reason dawns upon the mind of the Catholic child, obedience becomes a law. Blessed is that child who willingly takes up the yoke of obedience, and carries it through life. Sweetly and

joyfully did Marguerite Hibbert bear the holy yoke of obedience during the period of her short life; she failed not in the time of spiritual retreat to make fervent resolutions on the subject of obedience. She wrote down the following resolutions at the close of a retreat: 'I resolve to be very obedient to the orders of all those whom God has placed over me,—parents and superiors. I will be very respectful to priests, and those consecrated to God. I will try to become docile, as I am so deficient on this point. I do not only resolve to be obedient, but also *promptly* obedient; not waiting and reasoning, as I sometimes do; but doing what I am desired to do immediately, and to please God. I will now keep the rules of the school better, and will try to keep silence during schooltime, for the love of God, and thereby give good example to my companions. I resolve to answer my superiors in a meeker and sweeter tone always, subjecting myself to their wishes, and avoiding all murmuring against them.' Her good mother, on an occasion of her visiting home, censured her for a certain want of neatness and tidiness in her habits. The obedient child recognised her fault, and resolved to correct it.

She had some difficulty in doing so, as she was naturally very playful and restless, and opposed to that restraint which habits of neatness and order impose.

Among the resolutions of one of her retreats we find one in which she firmly determines to overcome, with God's grace, the defects named by her good mother. She succeeded in carrying out this resolution, which she formed in the spirit of obedience; and thenceforward she was remarkable for the great order and care with which she kept books, clothes, and everything that belonged to her. She was ever seeking to draw those around her to a closer and more faithful service of God, and she employed for this purpose example and sweet winning entreaty. One of her companions mentions, in the following terms, an incident which illustrates this beautiful trait in Marguerite's character: 'On a certain occasion, when one of the nuns had been urging us to a more strict observance of silence in schooltime, the holy child informed me—in the recreation hours—that she had something to propose to me. On my asking her what it was, she said, with her usual modesty, "But I am afraid you

will think I am dictating to you, who are so much older than I am." On my reassuring her, and begging her to continue, she said, "Let us try to do what the sister told us last night, and let us endeavour to keep silence." Frequently did I witness her efforts to preserve fidelity to this holy resolve. One Lent she determined to acquire the virtue of silence, and in order to facilitate the fulfilment of this duty, she procured a card, on which she made a mark every time she infringed the rule of silence, endeavouring every day to advance to greater perfection in the practice of this virtue, so that at Easter she could dispense with her card.'

Marguerite's obedience proceeded from a depth of affectionate reverence within her heart for parents and superiors. Piety does not dry up the fountain of those natural affections, which the hand of God has deepened and made holy, within the human breast, such as the affection of the child for the parent. It is the work of piety to deepen farther that well-spring, to purify and filter its waters, to raise them high above the level of earth, and give them a copiousness of outflow they never had

before. The pious child is the fondest and most affectionate of children.

The attachment of Marguerite Hibbert for her beloved parents shows itself in a high and touching manner in the following trait. Speaking one day to a companion, she said, 'To-morrow and the following day I shall have the happiness of burying myself as a dove in the Side and Heart of Jesus' (which meant, in her expressive language, that she was to receive Holy Communion on these two days); 'for to-morrow,' she continued, 'will be the anniversary of my dear papa's reception into the Catholic Church, and the following day will be mamma's birthday.' Could the affections of a loving child's heart show themselves in more tender or loftier form than this? She buries herself in the Heart of Jesus, there to plead earnestly and fondly for her parents, commemorating God's mercies in their regard, and suing for farther benedictions in their favour.

*Her detachment.*

There is no virtue more necessary for a soul, as the work of her sanctification makes progress, than that of detachment. The object

of this virtue is to give her freedom—freedom to rise up into God, as the unfettered eagle rises up into the skies. If we would belong entirely to God, we must cling to nothing that would keep us back from Him. Those of ardent, affectionate, sympathising dispositions are prone to cling to creatures. Great virtue alone preserves them from this danger. Marguerite was of an ardent and affectionate temperament. Her warm heart readily filled with grateful emotions towards those who rendered her any special service. She loved dearly her superiors at St. Mary's, and in a special manner that good sister to whom her education and spiritual instruction had been mainly confided. Her gratitude grew into a very warm attachment. This attachment was becoming slightly inordinate, and too human. The sensitive delicacy of Marguerite's conscience did not allow the danger to make much progress before it was checked and completely subdued. She had been in the habit of subjecting every emotion of her breast to the strictest self-scrutiny, and of rejecting with instinctive readiness everything imperfect in thought or feeling. In the time of retreat

especially, she carried the work of self-examen into the deepest recesses of her heart. It seemed to her at one of her retreats that her love for her superiors required to be moderated, as it might otherwise interfere with her progress in the perfect love of God. She consequently adopted the following resolution, which she committed to writing: 'I will no longer be foolish about my superiors, especially about Sister N. N., so that my love may be excessive only for our dear Lord.' One of her companions, wishing to put to the test Marguerite's spirit of detachment and perfect obedience, addressed her in these terms, in reference to the sister under whose care Marguerite was then placed, and to whom she knew her to be devotedly attached:

'Marguerite, if Sister N. N. were removed from her office, would you still seek to keep with your first mistress, or place yourself under the newly-appointed one?' Marguerite replied in her own candid manner: 'Whatever it might cost me, I would place myself under the person appointed to the office, for then I think the blessing of God would go with me.' What wisdom in this answer! It reveals to us a

soul supernaturally enlightened, and full of a generous courage to trample under foot its own fondest inclinations, in order to discharge a high duty of obedience, and accomplish perfectly God's holy Will.

*Her spirit of prayer and practices of piety.*

Prayer is a heavenly science, partly infused and partly acquired. The acquisition of this science bears strict proportion to one's desire to possess it, and to the labour and industry employed in seeking to secure it. Marguerite's prayer was evidently a special gift from God. Such ardours in one so young; such a power of seizing with mental grasp the highest branches of the tree of heavenly knowledge; such a tender intimacy of converse with Jesus and Mary, and the holy angels and blessed saints; such a lull of sense and passions; such a repose of face and posture, whilst the spirit within her was crying, Abba, Father,—all these tokens bespoke the descent upon her soul from heaven of the fiery tongue of prayer.

God's spiritual gifts, as a rule, are not bestowed upon us in the shape of the ripened fruit which requires no farther labour on our part



to bring it to perfection, but as the seed which has to be planted in the ploughed and harrowed ground, with the sweat of our brow, and whose growth we have to cultivate with unceasing care and industry. No gift from heaven needs a greater amount of generous labour and self-sacrifice on our part to bring it to perfection than the gift of prayer. Marguerite spared no pains to cultivate within her soul the gift of prayer, which had been so abundantly conferred upon her. The following are some of her practical resolutions on the subject of holy prayer: 'I resolve, by the grace of God, and by the intercession of the Blessed Mother of God, to become more devout regarding my prayers, both public and private; to avoid fidgeting, which causes most of my distractions; to try to keep my heart earnestly fixed on Almighty God, more especially during meditation, but not to constrain my senses if I feel I cannot meditate. When I feel dry in my prayer, as I frequently do, I will cast my eye on the tabernacle, on the image of my dearest mother Mary, or on that of my holy father St. Joseph, and think quietly and sweetly on one of them. In my preparation for the Sacraments, I will

keep the same rule. I will always try to make sincere confessions, carefully examining my conscience, but taking care not to be too scrupulous. I will excite myself to contrition, begging of Mary to obtain perfect contrition for me. I will make my good resolutions relying on the grace of God, and on the intercession of my dearest mamma Mary, begging her to obtain perseverance for me. After confession, I will give thanks to God for His benefits, thinking for a few minutes on what the priest has said to me, and not hurrying myself, as I have sometimes done. I will then renew my good resolutions, and make as fervent a preparation for Communion as possible. At Communion I will think of Jesus giving Himself to me as food in the Holy Eucharist. I will try to keep very recollected the day of my Communion. With regard to my morning and night prayers, I must keep quiet during them, and not repeat them two or three times, as I have occasionally done. I will make my visit to the Blessed Sacrament more devoutly and frequently. I will say the Communion beads, at least when I prepare for and have been to Communion. I will pay great attention to catechism and

spiritual reading, and seek to profit by them. I will also pay great attention and respect to Scripture history, so that by my good example I may inspire my companions with the same. I will behave respectfully in the chapel, and at all spiritual exercises, because God is present, and is worthy of love; and not for the creature, or because I shall be reproved if not good and respectful. This same attention I will observe with regard to all other duties. I will have always before my mind the presence of God, and will frequently unite myself to Him. I will make a good examination of conscience every night, and will try to avoid distractions during that time. I will ask leave to go after dinner daily to make a particular examen of conscience. I will during recreation times often raise my heart to our dear Lord. I will sometimes talk of Jesus and our Lady, so that they may not be quite forgotten on such occasions. I resolve to give good example to all my companions by great charity and meekness, by great attention at class and prompt obedience, and also by great humility.'

*Her spirit of self-denial.*

Marguerite could not have reached such an advanced degree of prayer, if she had not practised herself in the exercise of self-denial. The virtue of self-denial chastens, purifies, and subdues. It acts upon our souls in this life, much as the fire of Purgatory will do in the next. It renders them intensely spiritual, and removes obstacles to their union with God. It transforms, in a manner, matter into spirit, so that by the continued practice of it, the servants of God become almost as spiritual in body as they are in soul. Under its influence impediments to prayer vanish; the senses become avenues facing heavenwards, through which God approaches the soul, and the soul draws nigh to God; the passions enter into harmony with one another, and unite their collective energies in raising the soul higher and higher still on the path of her perfection. Hence it happens that our progress in prayer depends upon our progress in self-denial. Marguerite felt within her soul the necessity of practising self-denial, and she acted on this conviction, as her own words testify: 'I will try to acquire the virtue of mortification.'

I will mortify my self-will as well as my senses, and I will thank those who mortify or nettle my pride.' Again, we find her proposing to herself the following points for self-examination: What self-denial practised? What mortifications habitually performed? By these questions, which, kneeling before God in the hour of self-examen, she addressed to her soul, we learn that her mind was fully alive to the importance of fostering the practice of self-denial; and we also discover that there were certain acts of mortification which she habitually performed. She does not tell us what they were, and her humility veiled those holy practices, as far as it could, from the knowledge of everybody. She did not, however, always succeed in hiding her penitential practices, and there are still on record at St. Mary's, York, various details concerning her spirit of self-denial. Among the special ends which Marguerite proposed to herself, in her works of self-denial, was one which had awakened all her tender sympathy and holy compassion—it was that of aiding the suffering souls in Purgatory. In one of these pious resolutions, which she has committed to writing, she says: 'I

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will never forget the souls in Purgatory ; I will apply to them my self-denials, and the indulgences which I gain.'

*Her vocation.*

All are not to travel to heaven by the same path. Each soul has her own special call to obey. The young Christian soul commencing the journey of life should often ask God, with all fervour, to teach her His ways and to show her His paths. Before God makes known to us whither we should go, He first, as a rule, discloses to us, by a certain interior light, whither we should *not* go. We see distinctly, before the eyes of our soul, certain avenues of life which are closed against us, and by which *we* must *not* attempt to pass. Others pass through them without fault or blame ; but if *we* approach them, an inward voice warns us to withdraw. For a period we remain in suspense ; we pray, and in our prayer we repeat again and again, 'Lord, what wilt Thou that I do? My heart is ready, Lord, my heart *is* ready.' Our prayer is heard. A lamp shines at our feet, and a light beams on our path, and the voice of the Beloved says sweetly and

clearly, "Follow thou Me." The soul has received her call, God has spoken to her, doubts have vanished, the darkness is gone, the path of her vocation is visible to her view, and her heart is filled with courage from heaven to pursue it. It was thus, in answer to fervent prayer, that the soul of Marguerite became illumined with the knowledge of her special call. God first made known to her, by an interior light, that she was not for this world. In vain does the world appeal to her understanding, to her imagination, to her heart. In vain does it place before it wealth and rank, the admiration and esteem of creatures, and the warm affections of home. It has no power of attraction for her; her heart is elsewhere, she is resolved to renounce it. Is this resolution a childish impulse? Is it a fancy? Is it a delusion? By such terms is the act of renouncing the world oftentimes held up for reproach by those who comprehend not the things which are of the Spirit of God, which appear foolishness to them. Marguerite's contempt of the world was a conviction produced by the light of the Holy Spirit within her soul. It arose more from mind than feeling. It was an act first of the understanding and then

of the heart. He who reveals to little ones what He keeps hidden from the wise and the prudent made a revelation to her inner soul. She felt as one inspired as she looked on this world, and cast the glance of her spirit forward to the next. Looking around her, midst the perishing things of earth, she would say, 'Alas that my stay here is prolonged!' Looking upwards to heaven, with burning glance of faith, she would exclaim, 'Who will give me wings like a dove, that I may fly away, and be at rest? My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the house of the Lord.' Her heart was fixed on heaven. It seemed to her that the most direct and surest way of going to heaven was the religious state. She determines to become a nun. St. Mary's is the convent of her choice: she calls it the home of her heart. She fixes on the name she desires to bear in religion. In this simple matter, the choice of her religious name, the devout feelings of her heart find an expressive mode of manifesting themselves: Mary Joseph Seraphina Agnes of the Immaculate Conception was the title she resolved to take in religion. She selected this name because it represented to her mind those angels and saints

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that loved God most. Her devotion to St. Agnes was something specially deep and tender. Her spirit was sister to the spirit of St. Agnes. A heroic love of virginal purity dwelt within the breast of Marguerite Hibbert to such a degree, that if the occasion had offered itself, she would willingly have laid down her innocent life in its defence.

Marguerite did not adopt the resolution of quitting the world and becoming a nun solely under the influence of convent training. She had been at home for prolonged periods at different intervals during her school-days; she was far beyond her years in her studies and in her powers of mind. She was well capable of forming a deliberate and accurate judgment. On one occasion she went home to assist at the marriage of a dear sister, Lady A—. Foreseeing the series of home festivals in which she would necessarily have to take a part, she adopted wise precautions to prevent any wandering away of her affections from God, and all danger of worldly distraction of mind. In her heart she formed an interior solitude, where her soul dwelt in peaceful union with Jesus her Beloved. She returned to St. Mary's, her disposition

being unchanged. She thought the religious state the safest and most direct path to heaven ; but her Heavenly Father had appointed a way home for her to Himself, shorter still and more certain. He communicates to her secret soul an intimation that her earthly pilgrimage is drawing to its close. The longing to become a nun is now changed into a longing to die, and to go at once home to God. From the hour this blessed thought seized upon the spirit of Marguerite, her conversation became less and less of earth ; she often spoke of the happiness of dying young, and of going at an early age to heaven ; and she frequently expressed an ardent desire not to live beyond the years of St. Agnes, who passed to the embraces of Jesus in her thirteenth year. At that time a beautiful death took place at St. Mary's. It was that of one of the pupils, Annie M——, a convert to the Catholic faith, who died in her fourteenth year. She had been a subject of edification to all her companions, but on none of them did the memory of her pious life, and of her happy death, work so deep an impression as it did upon the soul of Marguerite. One day Marguerite seemed buried in some

deep train of holy thought ; she was meditating on the circumstances of the happy death of her dear companion. She was not conscious that anybody was noticing her, until at last she perceived that the eyes of her mistress were inquiringly fixed upon her. Unable to conceal the thoughts with which her heart was full, especially from her dear mistress, running to her, she exclaimed, 'O, sister, I do envy Annie M—— ! If I am not to be a nun, I must die at school.'

On another occasion she said to a companion, 'I am convinced I am not made for this world ; my eyes are fully open to its dangers and vanities.'

*Her approaching end.*

She had now entered on her thirteenth year. A something seemed to say to her heart that it was to be her last year on earth. She concealed not her thoughts, but would often say to her companions, with a look of triumph, 'I am now at the age at which St. Agnes died,' intimating at the same time that it was her joyful expectation to die that year. For some time a visible calm had been settling upon her,

all fidgety and restless ways had disappeared. Though she neglected no external duty, she was fully herself only when engaged in spiritual occupations. She could spend any length of time in holy contemplation without fatigue. On the morning of the last birthday she spent on earth, she received Holy Communion at the hands of the late venerable Dr. Briggs, Bishop of Beverley. This saintly prelate afterwards said that this dear child's countenance appeared so angelical, that he could not help lingering to gaze upon what was a feast to his soul. This occurred on the 17th of April, and she was looking forward with joyful expectation to the coming month of May. More than once she expressed a hope that the Blessed Virgin would take her to herself in her own month. She received Holy Communion on the 29th of April, on which day the feast of the patronage of St. Joseph fell. The afternoon of the following day she began her remote preparation for the Communion she intended to receive on the morning of the 1st of May. The desire of never returning to the world, and of going to heaven directly from that holy house where she then was, took the form of a prayer the

most earnest and unbroken, such a prayer God seldom refuses quickly to hear. She commenced, on the eve of the 1st of May, a novena—a nine days' prayer—for this intention, in which she induced many of her devout companions to join. The novena had scarcely begun when the first symptoms of that malady from which she was never to recover manifested themselves. She was taken ill in the convent chapel during the opening exercises of the month of Mary, at which all the sisters and pupils were present; she had to leave the chapel abruptly, never more to enter it. The first symptoms of her illness awakened no alarm. The physician pronounced that she had an influenza cold, which he thought would pass away in a few days. But his hopes were not to be realised. On the 6th of May her malady assumed a serious aspect. Her confessor, notwithstanding the assurances of her medical attendant, felt it his duty to prepare her for the last Sacraments. He heard her confession. After her confession her good mistress, who was in constant attendance upon her, spoke of the happiness of going in one's early days to heaven. Marguerite, with transports of joy,

exclaimed in reply, 'O, I do hope that our Lord will take me to Himself before the end of this month.' She was most cheerful and patient, and had only one wish ungratified, that was to receive Holy Communion. Low fever had succeeded the influenza cold, and her mind often wandered. Even when not conscious of what she said, every word she uttered breathed the most tender piety, and the most ardent love of Jesus and His dearest Mother, Mary. At last her confessor determined to administer to her the Holy Viaticum. It is not easy to describe the joyful emotions of this holy child, when the Body of our Lord was borne to her sick chamber. The love and fervour of her first Communion were surpassed only by the glowing piety of her last Communion. Her preparation was vehemently fervent. After she had received our Lord into her breast, her countenance glowed with seraphic fire. It was dreaded that her extraordinary ardours, her loving efforts, to welcome and thank her divine Guest would increase her dangerous symptoms; but it was not so, for she seemed to revive and to become decidedly better. The improvement, however, did not continue, and it became soon evident

to her attendants, that she was rapidly advancing to that term to which she had so long aspired.

*Her holy death.*

On Tuesday the 8th of May, her confessor felt the moment had come to prepare her to receive the Sacrament of Extreme Unction. He addressed her in these words: 'My dear child, I think you are dangerously ill; and though the doctors say it is not certain that you will die, yet I think it will be better to administer Extreme Unction to you.' The dear child, perfectly herself, looked sorrowful when he said it was not certain that she would then die, and replied, 'But I wish to die.' She commenced without delay her preparation for the last consolations of our holy religion. Those who were present declare they never witnessed such a scene. The characteristic ardour of this young and fervent soul displayed itself on this solemn and touching occasion. To the questions which the minister of God addressed to her, for the purpose of eliciting from her acts of faith, hope, and charity, she made answer in a loud and fervent voice: 'I do believe;' 'I do

hope;’ ‘I do love God.’ A supernatural strength seemed to be given to her for the occasion. All present were astonished, edified, and consoled. She pronounced a distinct act of contrition before each unction with great presence of mind, and with a loud clear voice. At intervals she broke forth into spontaneous prayers, which breathed a piety so tender and touching that all present were moved to tears. Perfectly present to everything she should do in preparing to appear before her God, she asked and received the last blessing, making aloud another act of contrition. After which, she asked for a crucifix blessed with a plenary indulgence for the hour of death. In the mean time she took her own loved crucifix, kissed it with extraordinary fervour, and placed it on her breast. She repeated aloud many aspirations such as these: ‘O, my God, I love Thee with my whole heart and soul. My sweet Jesus, my only Love, I offer Thee my heart, and soul, and body, and everything; I offer Thee my life, I offer Thee my death. O, my God, I am so sorry, I am heartily sorry for all the sins I have committed in my whole life. I do not want ever more to commit sin, I do not want



ever more to offend Thee.' She clasped a crucifix in one hand and rolled round the other her beads of the Immaculate Conception. She continued praying for several hours during the night of the 8th of May, with such vehemence that the sister infirmarian had to exert herself to prevent her wearing out her little remaining strength. About one in the morning of the 9th of May, she said distinctly, 'O my sweet Jesus, I do love Thee with my whole heart.' These were her last words. Her agony was very gentle, she did not appear to be conscious, but aspirations were suggested to her in which she could unite if she still preserved her senses. The superioress and the sisters watched and prayed around her bed until about five in the morning, when she sweetly and calmly slept in the Lord. She died on the last day of the novena which she had commenced on the 1st of May to obtain the grace of going soon to heaven. The first symptoms of her death illness showed themselves on the evening when the novena began. During life she was very devout to the seraphim, because of their super-eminent love of God. It was on the second day of the octave of the apparition of St.

Michael, Prince of the Seraphim, which feast is kept with great devotion at St. Mary's, York, that this ardent lover of Jesus and Mary and the holy angels left earth for heaven, there to love without measure Him whom she loved and served so faithfully during her short but holy life. It was a feast to gaze upon her holy remains after her departure. In her, death lost all its terrors. Her countenance was calm, sweet, and heavenly; it bore a triumphant smile, as if she were about to say, 'I have fought the good fight; there is laid up for me the crown of justice.' One of Marguerite's school companions, whose words have been already quoted in different portions of this narrative, thus feelingly describes the sentiments which she experienced on the occasion of her holy death: 'As her saintly death drew near, she seemed to make more rapid strides on the path of perfection than before. Far from dreading the approach of death, she hailed it with unfeigned joy. And, indeed, how could she dread appearing before her supreme Judge when her whole life had been one continued preparation for her passage from this world into eternity? We were not permitted

to visit the chamber of our beloved companion during her illness, but after her death that privilege was no longer denied to us. Ever since the day I saw her laid out, her image has been firmly fixed in my memory ; she appeared to me after death even more beautiful than in life. She was entirely covered in white—fit emblem of that purity and innocence that had characterised her during life. A sweet smile played upon her lips, and her features wore the expression of one who was in possession of deep unutterable joy and felicity. Her hands, crossed on her bosom, clasped the crucifix at whose feet she had poured forth so many fervent and persevering prayers for herself and her less virtuous companions. On hearing of her death, I did not grieve for her as I should for many ; the tears I shed over her lifeless corpse were tears mingled with a joy wholly unearthly. For who, looking on that angelic form, and thinking of the life of innocence and sanctity she had led, could doubt for a moment that her perfect soul was already in the enjoyment of the Beatific Vision? She died at the early age of thirteen. A tender devotion to the chaste spouse of Jesus, St.

Agnes, had inspired this holy child with a burning desire to leave this cold world, so unworthy of such a treasure, at the same age as that at which St. Agnes suffered martyrdom; and her beloved Lord granted her what she so earnestly prayed for. I trust she will obtain from Jesus for me, and the companions whom she has left to lament her loss, the grace to imitate her example and to walk in her footsteps.'





## THE FIRST COMMUNION OF TWO ORPHAN FLOWER-SELLERS.

THE gift of faith is the eyesight of the soul. When a soul possesses this gift, the work of her instruction is an easy task. It is like presenting objects in daylight to one of good sight. As the eyes of the child, by reason of its gift of sight, can behold the stars in the distant firmament, so by reason of the gift of faith the minds of children readily acquire the perception of the loftiest mysteries of the Catholic religion. We have lately been contemplating, in the life of a saintly child, how, even in early youth, the gift of faith may ripen into fruits of exalted holiness. But the faith of Marguerite Hibbert was like choice seed planted within an enclosed garden, where it was sheltered and cultivated with ceaseless care and devotedness. We shall now, in the

brief narrative which follows, contemplate the seed-grains of faith growing by themselves on the wayside, in the midst of a moral wilderness—in the heart of London.

Some years since, a poor Irish Catholic died in a miserable court, in one of the poorest neighbourhoods in London. His wife soon followed him to the grave. They left behind them, alone and unprotected, two orphan children, who were twin sisters. These poor little ones had been baptised, but were too young, at the death of their parents, to be instructed in their religion. They could barely recollect that their dying mother bade them always to remember that they were Catholics. Years pass by, and they grow up in utter ignorance of all religious knowledge. A special providence watched, however, over them. The baptismal grace was still fresh and undimmed within their souls. A charitable person set them up as flower-sellers. They were two fair flowers themselves in outward form, but more still in inner purity of mind and heart. Their calling was one of great danger for children so fair and so unprotected. But an invisible hand was shielding them from evil.

The lilies in their flower-baskets quickly faded and withered; but there was a lily within their young souls which nothing could tarnish, sheltered as it was by the special protection of heaven, and by their own instinctive modesty. In their sisterly attachment for each other, they found a safeguard against the intrusion of dangerous companions. They always remained together, and each was as the visible guardian angel of the other. They had now reached their fourteenth year, but had not yet found their way to a Catholic church, or spoken to a priest. A mission, in which the writer took a part, opened in a church in their neighbourhood. The grace of the mission first reached one, and then the other, of these young souls. One day, during the mission, the writer was accosted in the church by a young girl of gentle manner, and of modest appearance, in these words: 'Sir, I have heard that kind gentlemen have come hither to teach little children the way to go to heaven. Will you please tell me how I am to go to heaven, as I wish very much to go there?' She then, in reply to questions put to her, made known her simple touching story, as

above related. The writer willingly undertook the task of instructing one so eager to learn. Having expounded to her point after point of the doctrines of the Church, he at last ventured to speak of our Lord's Real Presence in the Blessed Sacrament. At first he hesitated to place this great dogma before her, at so early a stage of her religious instruction. He counted not on the help his teaching was to receive from the gift of faith, which had been communicated to her in holy Baptism. The doctrine of the Real Presence was scarcely proposed to her, when her soul seemed to rise at once to a perception of its beauty. When her instructor first said to her that our Lord was really present in the Holy Eucharist, she exclaimed with extraordinary energy, 'Is it our Lord *Himself—Himself?*' 'Yes, my child,' was his reply, 'it is our Blessed Lord Himself, who is willing to become the food even of your poor little soul.' Visible emotion rose to her countenance; she seemed for some moments lost in deep thought. The Holy Spirit was, without doubt, at that instant filling her soul with the brightness of Eucharistic faith. Recovering somewhat from her emotion, she cried



out, 'How beautiful — how beautiful!' The writer witnessed this scene with wonder. He was surprised to behold how quickly this poor child, brought up amidst the dregs of London society, in poverty and ignorance, became the devout contemplative of the great mystery of the Holy Eucharist. Her young heart had scarcely caught the fire of the knowledge and love of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, when she felt glowing also within it a burning desire to communicate to her dear sister the glad tidings which had reached herself. Interrupting her instructor with an apology, she said: 'I do wish that my sister could hear all that I have heard to-day about the Blessed Sacrament. With your permission I will go in search of her, and when she comes, you will kindly tell her that our Lord is present Himself in the Blessed Sacrament, and she will be delighted, I am sure, to hear it.' In a few minutes she returned in company with her sister. They were sisters in mind and heart, as well as in bodily resemblance and kindred. The latter who presented herself soon rivalled the former in devotion to our Lord's Eucharistic Presence. After the lapse of some days

they both knelt together to receive, for the first time, Jesus Incarnate into their loving hearts. Many scenes were being enacted that day within the precincts of the great city of London, but it may be questioned whether any one of them so fixed the gaze of heaven as the first Communion of the orphan flower-sellers.





## HEROIC DEED OF CHARITY OF TWO YOUNG GIRLS.

FOREMOST among the virtues which the young Christian soul should be trained at an early age to practise, is the virtue of fraternal charity. Works of charity have a special power in subduing and sanctifying the passions of the youthful breast. When the spirit of fraternal charity enters the heart of the youthful Christian, it forestalls and excludes the spirit of the world. The charitable, by a blessed necessity, become unworldly, unselfish, pure-minded, and devout. Moreover, the exercise of this virtue in early youth multiplies blessings—the fruitful blessings of the poor—upon the first steps in life of the young Christian soul. Parents should rejoice when they behold son or daughter animated by the spirit of fraternal charity. No more certain fore-

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sign could they possess of their child's future happiness, usefulness, and holiness.

One of the most touching phases of fraternal charity is the charity of the poor for the poor. Wonderful are the sacrifices which the poor often impose on themselves for the relief of one another. And that happens, not unfrequently, when it is the utter stranger that has to be relieved and provided for.

We shall now place before our readers a heroic deed of charity performed by two young girls of very humble rank, for the details of which the writer can vouch from his own personal knowledge. A poor aged woman, venerable in appearance and bent almost to the ground from years and infirmities, sank one day exhausted by the wayside in one of the chief thoroughfares of the city of Dublin. The writer cannot give her history; she was evidently one who had seen better days, though now seemingly utterly destitute and friendless. For this poor woman God is preparing a singular mercy. Who are to be the chosen instruments of His compassion in her regard? Many went by without noticing her wants and afflictions, and her heart is sinking under a load of

despondency as she perceives the day is waning, and that nobody is coming to her relief. At last she is approached by two young girls. They have just lost their widowed mother, whose only support they had been for some years. The low moaning of the poor aged woman at the street-side attracts their attention. As they fix their pitying eyes upon her, a common thought flashes across their minds. It is an inspiration from the God of charity. There was a moment of silence. At last one said to the other, 'Sister, it occurs to me that God would be pleased with us if, out of love for Him, we adopted this poor woman as our mother, and took her to our home, and watched over her as long as she lived.' 'How strange!' replied the other; 'the same thought was in my mind when you spoke. It must be God Himself who has put it into our hearts. He helped us to provide for our own dear mother till her death; He will also certainly help us to provide for this poor woman, if we adopt her as our mother.' These generous-hearted young girls determined to carry out the magnanimous resolution of adopting that poor aged stranger, to whom they had

not yet spoken even a word, as their mother. They could not be ignorant of the toil and anxiety and the many privations they would have to face in taking upon themselves the burden of this poor woman's support. They silenced, however, all fears by these words, so full of simple beautiful trust in God: 'God helped us to provide for our own mother. He will also help us to provide for this poor woman.' Her consent to their charitable proposal had to be obtained. Modestly they approach her, and address her as if asking some great favour from her. The face of the poor aged woman brightened with joy as she heard the proposal made to her. Perhaps in former years God had deprived her of loving daughters, whose lives she had offered up to Him with resignation, and now He, who never forgets to reward for every sacrifice endured for His sake, is about to raise up for her other daughters, who will love her and watch by her till the end of her pilgrimage.

The poor aged stranger is transferred to the home of these charitable young girls, and installed in their mother's place. She was worthy of all their fond reverence. She was

one of God's hidden saints. Prayer was her continual and most consoling occupation. The writer was one day invited to visit this aged servant of God. He found her kneeling on her lowly couch, in silent but earnest prayer. Everything around her was very humble, but perfectly neat and clean. Under her eyes was an altar decorated with lights and flowers, in the centre of which was a crucifix and a statue of the Immaculate Mother. The altar was placed thoughtfully for her benefit on the ground, as owing to her very stooped posture she could not fix her eyes upon it, had it occupied a higher level. At her side stood her two gentle benefactresses, contemplating with beaming faces the happiness of her whom, though a stranger, they loved as their own mother. Well might they gaze with delight on such a scene—the work of their own hands and hearts, of their faith and of their love. How many, with thousands yearly at their disposal, have never once created for themselves such a joy! The writer could ill suppress a tear as he heard this venerable woman relate, with grateful emotion, all that had been done for her by these pious young girls. On their

part, they seemed entirely unconscious of the great beauty and merit of their self-forgetting devotedness and charity. They continued their loving care of their adopted mother until the advent of her happy death. They knelt to receive her blessing when she was dying, and surely it must have sunk deeply into their souls. It is not likely these lines will ever meet their eyes. They belonged to a class who pray much, who labour much, but who read little. Years have since gone by. Perhaps they have already joined their aged *protégée* in heaven, and have heard those words from the lips of Jesus as they passed before His judgment throne: 'I was a stranger, and you took Me in; I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat; come, ye blessed of My Father.'

THE END.

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